

Mac-Haydn Theatre, Chatham, NY

Sister Act, Music by Alan Menken, Lyrics by Glenn Slater,
Book by Cheri and Bill Steinkellner; Additional Book Material by Douglas Carter Beane;
Based on the Touchstone Pictures Motion Picture, *Sister Act*, written by Joseph Howard.
Directed and choreographed by Todd Underwood.
Reviewed by J. Peter Bergman.

“I’m fabulous, Baby.”

“Sister Act,” a great film, is not a great musical. It is very entertaining,, but that’s it. It requires an enormous talent to play Deloris and in Laiya Parker the Mac-Haydn only has a good one. The show does have a supporting cast that overatches her, including the remarkable Monica Wemitt as Mother Superior and Cydney Gleckner as Sister Mary Robert.



Laiya Parker (center) and cast of Sisiter Act; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Technically the show is a dream. Matt Levinson conducted a bright and exuberant band. Andrew Gmoser brilliantly lit the cast and the sets designed by Jeffrey Petersen and fine costumes designed by Daniel Hewson. Sound was a problem with Parker’s microphone not working for much of the show. Director Todd Underwood handled the scenes well, as he did the

choir numbers staging, but his basic choreography was uninteresting.

Parker is a big woman who exhibited power and strength but whose character interpretation seemed weak. I had difficulty buying her as Deloris. Many of her spoken lines were hard to understand and the crispness of good comedy just got lost.

On the other hand, Judith Wyatt as Sister Mary Lazarus was hilarious as was Bella Babcock as Sister Mary-Martin-of-Tours, Samantha Rhea Parrish gave an exuberant performance as Mary Patrick. The Men in the show were also quite good, particularly Jake Koch, Fernando Flores and Anthony Michael Velez in their almost-show-stopping song in Act Two, “Lady in the Long Black Dress.”



Laiya Parker; Photo: Ann Kie4lbasa



Monica M. Wemitt; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Brian D, Wagner was a fine Monsignor O’Hara, especially in his confrontational moments with the thrilling Mother Superior of Monica M. Wemitt. She carries this part in her emotional pocket and keeps settling the overwrought book scenes that keep the show’s basic conflicts going. Her singing is excellent but her acting is superb. I cannot imagine a better choice for this role than Wemitt. Her final moments with Deloris were emotionally so right that they made the show

The big problem for me were the songs; there isn’t one that I can recall which for me is never a good sign in a musical. I like to come out humming something new and it wasn’t doable with “Sister Act.” I can close with “I Could Be That Guy,” well performed by Josh Walker as Eddie, the cop who helps and ultimately falls for Deloris. Walker is very good in the role, particularly in his dramatic scenes with her.

As indicated the cast is very strong in this show; it is the show itself that is weak. The

authors failed in their tasks and left an acting company only half of what they really need to make it a perfect evening.

This isn't a show you'll see often so if you are a fan of musicals this is your finest opportunity. I'd say, "go, sit back and laugh." You can't ask much more than that on a hot summer night.

+ 06/28/2024 +



Josh Walker; Photo: Ann Kielbasa

Sister Act runs for three weeks

at the Mac-Haydn Theatre, 1925 State Road 206, Chatham, NY - through July 14. For tickets and information, please visit www.machaydntheatre.org or call the box office at (518) 392-9292.